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MEDICAL. To the Inhabitants of Midhurſt, in the County of Sussex. Advice againſt the Modern Practice of Inoculating the Small Pox, by Seren Barrett, Curate of Midhurſt.

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To the INHABITANTS *of the Parish of MIDHURST, in the County of SUSSEX.*

ADVICE

Against the

Modern Practice

OF

INOCULATING

THE

SMALL POX.

By *SEREN. BARRETT*,
Curate of *Midhurst*

LONDON:

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TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

Pariſh of MIDHURST,

IN THE

County of SUSSEX.

My Dear Friends and Pariſhioners;

HAving heard that ſome Eſſays were lately offered at, and Attemps begun to recommend to you a Practice which in ſeveral places has prevailed, of Inoculating the Small Pox, I think it my Duty, being placed here as your Paſtor and Watchman, to give this early Warning, againſt acceding to a Meaſure which carrys ſo much Danger a-

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long with it of ſhaking or undermining that Fiducial Hope and Affiance which every good Chriſtian ought to repoſe in Almighty God; and appears unſuitable to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity you make, and to reflect Diſhonour upon you, as Members of the Eſtabliſh'd Church, give me leave therefore to offer to your Reading and Peruſal, what I lately offered to your Hearing from the Pulpit in the following words: 'Twas a Rule or Axiom pronounced by our Saviour's own Mouth, *That the Whole needed not a Phyſician but the Sick*; and I know of no Warrant we have to force Sickneſs upon ourſelves by courting a real Diſtemper, in order to be made whole again, whither by God's Providence or the Phyſician's Skill, and ſuch as act without his Licence and Permiſſion may chance to find Succeſs, where they never ſhall find his Bleſſing, and they that like this way may chuſe it if they will.

Our firſt Enquiry ſhou'd be this: Is the thing propounded lawful to be done? if any juſt Exception or Cauſe of Doubt appears, then beware, there is danger in the way; but if it croſſes any of the great Lines of Scripture, or is repugnant to the Rules and Offices of that Church, which you own to be of God, 'tis much more to be ſuſpected: if after this any

any Doubt can remain, to Inſtance in ſome Particulars, and I cou'd do it in many.

Don't you every Day look up to Heaven, and call God, Father, and does not the Scripture, and your own Church tell you that all Afflictions, Sickneſſes and Diſtempers, are Rods of Correction in the Hand of this Father; now who do you Imagine carrys ſuch tender Bowels as a Father? who ſo Good and Powerful as your Heavenly Father? And what don't you dare truſt him with thoſe Bodies which he lately form'd out of the Duſt of the Ground, which he daily feeds, and cloaths and maintains in Life, and Being? Muſt you needs bring a Diſtemper upon yourſelves, for fear you ſhou'd receive it at his Hands? Is it not in his Power, to ſtrip you of any one, nay of all your Comforts in a Moment, and leave you more Wretched then you came into the World, was he as willing to take the advantage or to deſtroy you, as you are ready to provoak and forſake him?

But to Return to my Argument, Who Puniſhes with ſo much Pity and Concern, and Sincere Intention of our good as this Father? But if you refuſe his Corrections, or ſeek them from other Hands, I pronounce nothing in the caſe, but bid you beware that

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while you own him not as a Father by bearing his Rod, he don't disown you for his Children, which will be the very worst thing that has befallen you ever since you were Born, *Know this*, says our excellent Church, *that Almighty God is Lord of Life and Death, and all things to them appertaining, as Youth, Strength, Health, Age, Weakness and Sickness; therefore whatsoever your Sickness be, know certainly that it is God's Visitation.* But how absurdly is this said of a Distemper importuned and forc'd either with, or against the Consent of Providence. And again in her Prayers, *Sanctify Lord, this thy Fatherly Correction*; and in the office of the Communion for sick Persons, *My Son despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when tho art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth, Heb:* xii. 5. Now if Distempers are God's Scourges, how dares the Physician to take up these Rods or Scourges into his Hands as if he could use them better. Does the Church Err in her Exhortations and Prayers, or do these Men Err in their Practice? for one of these Two I believe must follow. What do they less than invade God's Prerogative in the Sense of the Scriptures, in the Sense of the Church? (I

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Joyn them together, and may they never be ſeparated or put a aſunder.) If they have a Licenſe or Permiſſion, let them produce it, or elſe own that they act without Authority here: But if they will abſurdly ſay, that it is no more than giving or taking Phyſick, let them ſhew by whoſe Authority they compound or you receive this Doſe at their Hands; tis ſuch Phyſick as God himſelf prepares to cure the worſt Diſtempers of our Nature. Let the bold Adventurers in the Art take care how they perſcribe and give it leſt they adminiſter it wrongfully, and it prove Poiſon, inſteed of a ſalutary Draught or Potion. 'Twas indeed an Office in the Primitive Church, belonging to the Spiritual Phyſician, to inflict Diſtempers by his Sentence of Excommunication; this St *Paul* did by *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, and the Inceſtuous *Corinthian*. Yet this was never an Office belonging to the Phyſicians of the Body; and let their Judgment in the Medicinal Art be never ſo good, yet they are no ſuch Adepts here: they ſhould therefore modeſtly forbear and leave to God the things that are God's.

Secondly, 'Tis a Practice which bears extreamly hard upon the Belief of a Particular Providence, without whoſe Knowledge and Permiſſion not a Sparrow falls to the Ground,

Ground, much leſs the Life of Man, and our Saviour's expreſs Command built upon it againſt taking Thought. I Know 'twill be replied that an Anxious Solicitous Thoughtfulneſs is here intended, and I own the Interpretation to be juſt, but then allowing ſuch a Particular Providence as our Lord and the Church, ſpeaking in his Language, bids us acknowledge, I anſwer it muſt be ſuch a Sollicitous Thoughtfulneſs or ſomething elſe as culpable, that will venture to break through thoſe Fences, which our Saviour's Words and the ſeveral places of Scripture I am now about to mention, have ſet about our Duty, and which can't without great Violence offered the Text be reconciled to this Practice.

As I waited Patiently for the Lord. Commit thy ways unto the Lord and put thy Truſt in him. Hold thee ſtill and abide patiently upon him. And now Lord what wait I for, my Hope is in thee. The Lord is good to them that wait for him. To the Soul that ſeeketh him. It is good that a Man ſhou'd both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of God. Truſt in the Lord with all thy Strength, and lean not to thine own Underſtanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths.

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The name of the Lord is a ſtrong Tower, the Righteous runneth unto it and are ſafe: All they that hope in him ſhall not be aſhamed: With almoſt infinite more, which I have not time to mention. And if you are pleas'd with the advice of a Heathen *Virgil*, he gives it thus, *A Jove Principium, Let God be foremoſt in all thy Works*; but it won't be enough that we ſpeak him fair and compliment him with our Words, while we thruſt him hindmoſt in our Actions.

What is it but an evil Heart of unbelief that can't wait God's Time, and accept of a Diſtemper in God's way: The Scripture you know has fixed it as a laſting Brand of Infamy upon *Aſa*, that in the time of Sickneſs he ſought to the Phyſicians and not to God; but theſe Men in the midſt of Health ſeek to the Phyſicians to be made Sick, not to go to God but to the Phyſicians for their Recovery. If after all they will ſay they expect the Bleſſing from God, I anſwer let them ſtay till he ſends the Sickneſs upon them. Will they limit him to their own Time and Methods? If the Succeſs is not expected from the Phyſician, why does he call for the Diſtemper whether it pleaſe God or not? And our bleſſed Lord, the beſt Pattern we can follow, *when he felt* his natural

Appetite and Desire of Food painfull, in a place that was desert and barren, could no doubt with as little Trouble have turn'd the Stones of the Wilderness into Bread to satisfy his own Hunger, as he afterwards multiplied and augmented the Substance, and raised the Virtue of a few Loaves and Fishes to satisfy many Thousands; but he refused to do so, to teach us to wait upon God in his wise and regular Appointments, instead of pursuing extraordinary and unlicenced Methods, and striking out dark and by-Paths of our own. And he could with as little Hazardh his Person cast himself down from the top of the Temple, as walk on the Tops of Waves, but to caution us by his Example not to tempt the Lord our God. In the first Instance, acting as Man, he shewed to Men their Duty: in the latter, above Man, as God, he proved his own divine Power. And in one of the greatest Tryals that could befall Human Nature, set his Father's Will above his own, *Not my Will, says he, but thine be done.* If it be said that he perfectly knew God's Will, and therefore submitted quietly to it: I answer 'tis our Duty to submit where we know not so perfectly well, rather than run the Hazard of committing a Sin by transgressing a Duty we

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do know. And how much safer may a Man go to his Prayers when he can say, *Father thy Will be done*, than while he is only pursuing and following his own Will; and if 'tis a Question whether I can lawfully pray for the Success of an Action, 'tis hardly a Question whether such an Action be lawful to be done.

Lastly, Should the Success be wanting, and Death supply the room of Health, (for in all cases of this Nature we are to provide against the Worst, as well as Hope and Expect the Best that may happen) I ask could we yield with the same Composure and Resignation of Mind as if the Distemper invaded and finished its course in the natural way? Wou'd not the Shock indeed be very grievious and intolerable to us? But for what Reason if the Circumstances on both sides were equal. The different Resentment felt in these two cases, proves a great Difference between them; and it is this in the first, we are led by a blamable Will of our own, to chuse an Action which an awakened Conscience is forced to condemn: In the latter we have nothing else to do but submit ourselves to God's Will, which is always best for us when 'tis done; and remember that if you depart from God, by chusing any

unwarrentable Methods of your own, you forſake your only Strength. In vain is Health and Salvation hop'd for from any other, if you depend upon the Phyſician's Skill for Succeſs, that is only a Man whoſe Breath is in his Noſtrils, his Knowledge and Power extend to very few things, and by Reaſon of Mortality is not to be accounted of.

If you eſcape the Danger of one Diſtemper, yet your Time and yourſelves are ſtill in God's Hands to do as he will; while you ſhut one Door a thouſand more ſtand wide open every hour, and by one Death will enter; and while you fly as you think from the Grave you are poſting towards it: And ſhould it pleaſe God to viſit you with ſome contagious Diſtemper, don't ſay with the blind Heathens 1. *Sam.* vi. 9. *That a Chance has happened to you*; but with Hearts lift up to Heaven, and Eyes caſt down upon the Ground, ever acknowledge 'tis God's Hand has done it.

But you will ſay, is all the care of Health by Phyſick and other prudent Methods to be rejected? I mean no ſuch thing; as God has given me a Life and Being, ſo a prudent care to preſerve them is lawful and a Duty; but let every method and means be ſtrictly conformable to his Will, who giveth and taketh

taketh away at his own pleaſure, nor dare you ſay to him, what doſt thou? And if a fondneſs for the Pleaſures and Advantages which the World affords, make you too fond of Life, yet aſſure yourſelves they are not all worth ſaving at the Price of one Sin: I know there are ſeveral things pleaded by the Favourers of this Novel Fancy, but they being only ſecular Motives and Conſiderations, I ſhall leave them to make the moſt of them, and content myſelf to give this general Anſwer for all.

He that acts not with his Duty and the Approbation of God, has every thing in the World to dread, let the preſent Event be ever ſo proſperous; and a Man that is always carefull to live with a good Conſcience, will ſcarce find himſelf under any Neceſſity to take extraordinary Methods for which he has no Direction from God. Therefore as I ſaid at firſt, you ought to be certain that the thing be lawful and right before you venture upon it, leſt you do Evil that Good may come, and go with the Multitude where it is not ſafe following, and ſuffer by your Advantages, and be greater looſers by your very Gains.

I ſay not theſe things to ſhame or provoak any, but as my beloved Brethren I warn you. I deliver my Opinion as one that

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muſt ſhortly go to give an Account to God of your Souls and mine, and that if you ſhould miſtake, and the Miſtake prove of worſe conſequence at laſt then you now care to believe, it may not be ſaid, He that was to give Advice deceived you, or was ſilent when it was his Duty to ſpeak.

Thus far have I ventur'd the Publick Scorn and Cenſure to diſcharge my Conſcience to you, and I lay it upon you to diſcharge yours. Tis a very eaſy thing for People to impoſe upon themſelves, or be impoſed upon by others, where a popular Opinion comes recommended by ſome preſent Advantage, which dazzles their Eyes; but ſhould this bluſtering Practice prove rotten at laſt in the Foundation, you will find God Almighty the hardeſt Perſon in the World to be Deceiv'd or Impos'd upon.

But if I am wrong in any thing now advanc'd, I wiſh that ſome abler Pen would undertake the Subject, that Peoples minds might be ſatisfied and their Practice better directed in ſuch a Slippery way, where in they may fall, but certainly commit no Sin at all by avoiding it.

In the mean Time this is the ſafeſt Rule that we can ſteer our Actions by, in every doubtful caſe, (as this may be to ſeveral of you

you) to chuſe on the ſafeſt Side for another World, what ever becomes of the preſent. And I am ſo far convinc'd of my Sincerity in what I have now delivered, that I am ready, ſhould any one Deſire it, for his own Satisfaction, and not for the Sake of raiſing a Cavil or contentious Diſputation, to offer it to the Opinion of the moſt Judicious and Orthodox Divines among us, either to maintain my own Arguments, or to ſubmit if better are offered on the other ſide the Queſtion.

But I would not have the Ignorant, and Unlearnt, who have no pretence to it, ſet up for Caſuiſts, or think that their Judgment can't deceive them, or that they are in the Right becauſe they can tell Numbers, and the Multitude is on their Side, or becauſe Succeſs is at preſent with them, which is all the Merit or Value that Thouſands ſet on any of their Actions, whither Good or Bad: and yet was Succeſs an Argument to be depended on, then never any good Man that has been unhappy was in the Right; nor any bad Man that has proſpered in the World was in the Wrong; I would not have them think that every Phyſician is a Divine, nor every Divine is to be credited, if he teaches or acts contrary to the Scripture or the Rules of his own Church.

I Dont reject the Phyſician's Skill in the lawfull means of Health, but let him act as an Inſtrument under God, and not climbe up into his Seat; let him heal our Sickneſſes, but not bring them upon us; nor to ſhew a wanton Skill, lead us down to the Grave, that we may thank and pay him for leading us back again.

And now I have ſaid this, and was I to add a great deal more, perhaps it would be to little purpoſe; for People that are reſolv'd before hand to follow their own byaſſed Inclinations will not be perſwaded by *Moſes* and the Prophets, or even *Lazarus* if he was to appear to them from the Dead. I can therefore only wiſh that after theſe Endeavours uſed, the Guilt don't reſt in your own Boſom, nor the Miſchief light on your own Heads; and that the Blame of perſuing unlawfull Meaſures, while you forſake my Advice, whither through Neglect or Scorn may not be laid to your Charge.

I am

Your Faithfull Paſtor and Servant,

S. B.

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